CLAIMS

- 1. A communication interface between an accounting application and a printer agent ap-
- 2 plication executing on a computer network, the interface comprising:
- application programming interface (API) functions exchanged between the appli-
- 4 cations that provide accounting support for print services directed to a print job received
- by the printer agent, the accounting support services including tracking production of the
- 6 print job and computer network resources consumed by the job, the API functions com-
- 7 prising a first print service API that is called by the printer agent before the print job is
- 8 created and that enables the accounting application to one of reject the print job, accept
- 9 the print job and instruct the printer agent to place an accounting hold on the print job.
- 2. The communication interface of Claim 1 wherein the API functions further comprise a
- second print service API that is called by the printer agent after the print job is created
- and before the job is scheduled for processing, the second print service API including (i)
- a job identifier for use by the accounting application to evaluate and act upon attributes of
- the job and (ii) a file path to a document data file associated with the job.
- 3. The communication interface of Claim 2 wherein the API functions further comprise a
- third print service API that is called by the printer agent when processing of the print job
- is complete, the third print service API including the job identifier and the file path to the
- document data file associated with the job, the file path used by the accounting applica-
- 5 tion to evaluate the completed job and perform accounting operations.
- 4. The communication interface of Claim 3 wherein the accounting application and
- 2 printer agent execute on a print server of the computer network, and wherein the API
- 3 functions facilitate computing of charges by the accounting application for print services
- and materials used by a print client of the computer network.

- 5. A method for communicating between applications executing on a computer network,
- the method comprising the steps of:
- providing an accounting application configured to run on a first device coupled to
- 4 the network;
- 5 providing a printer agent application configured to run on a second device cou-
- 6 pled to the network, the printer agent representing a printer on the network and contain-
- 7 ing information about the printer; and
- exchanging application programming interface (API) function calls between the
- 9 applications that provide accounting support for print services relating to a print job re-
- ceived by the printer agent and directed to the printer, the accounting support services
- including tracking production of the print job and resources consumed by the job.
- 6. The method of Claim 5 wherein the first device is a computer and the second device is
- the printer, and wherein information contained in the printer agent comprises a network
- address of the printer and a status of the printer.
- 7. The method of Claim 5 wherein the step of exchanging comprises the step of calling a
- 2 first print service API at the printer agent before the print job is created, the first print
- service API enabling the accounting application to one of reject the print job, accept the
- 4 print job and instruct the printer agent to place an accounting hold on the print job.
- 8. The method of Claim 7 wherein the step of exchanging further comprises the step of
- 2 calling a second print service API at the printer agent after the print job is created and
- before the job is scheduled for processing, the second print service API including (i) a job
- 4 identifier for use by the accounting application to evaluate and act upon attributes of the
- job and (ii) a file path to a document data file associated with the job.
- 9. The method of Claim 8 wherein the step of exchanging further comprises the step of
- 2 calling a third print service API at the printer agent when processing of the print job is
- complete, the third print service API including the job identifier and the file path to the

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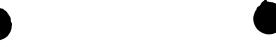
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- document data file associated with the job, the file path used by the accounting applica-
- tion to evaluate the completed job and perform accounting operations.
- 10. The method of Claim 9 further comprising the step of registering the accounting ap-
- 2 plication with the printer agent to provide the printer agent with addresses for the API
- 3 print service calls.
- 1 11. The method of Claim 10 further comprising the steps of, wherein the first and second devices comprise a single print server:
- submitting the print job from a print client on the network to the printer agent;

 obtaining information about the print job at the accounting application using the
- 5 API function calls; and
- using the obtained information to leverage functions directed to acquiring and setting attributes for the print job, thereby extending the utility of the attribute functions for the accounting application.
 - 12. A computer readable medium containing executable program instructions for communicating between applications executing on a computer of a network, the executable program instructions comprising program instructions for:
 - configuring an accounting application to run on the computer;
 - configuring a printer agent application to run on the computer, the printer agent representing a printer on the network and containing information about the printer; and exchanging application programming interface (API) function calls between the
- applications that provide accounting support for print services relating to a print job received by the printer agent and directed to the printer, the accounting support services
- including tracking production of the print job and computer resources consumed by the
- 11 **job**.
- 13. The computer readable medium of Claim 12 wherein the program instruction for ex-
- 2 changing comprises the program instruction for calling a first print service API at the



- printer agent before the print job is created, the first print service API enabling the ac-
- 4 counting application to one of reject the print job, accept the print job and instruct the
- 5 printer agent to place an accounting hold on the print job.
- 14. The computer readable medium of Claim 13 wherein the program instruction for ex-
- 2 changing further comprises the program instruction for calling a second print service API
- at the printer agent after the print job is created and before the job is scheduled for proc-
- essing, the second print service API including (i) a job identifier for use by the account-
- ing application to evaluate and act upon attributes of the job and (ii) a file path to a
- 6 document data file associated with the job.
- 15. The computer readable medium of Claim 14 wherein the program instruction for ex-
- 2 changing further comprises the program instruction for calling a third print service API at
- the printer agent when processing of the print job is complete, the third print service API
- 4 including the job identifier and the file path to the document data file associated with the
- job, the file path used by the accounting application to evaluate the completed job and
- 6 perform accounting operations.
- 16. The computer readable medium of Claim 15 further comprising the program instruc-
- tion for registering the accounting application with the printer agent to provide the printer
- agent with addresses for the API print service calls.
 - 17. The computer readable medium of Claim 16 further comprising program instructions
- for, wherein the computer is a print server:
- submitting the print job from a print client on the network to the printer agent;
- obtaining information about the print job at the accounting application using the
- 5 API function calls; and

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- 6 using the obtained information to leverage functions directed to acquiring and
- setting attributes for the print job, thereby extending the utility of the attribute functions
- 8 for the accounting application.